

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
MCALLEN DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Plaintiff

VS.

TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN \$
THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND \$
NINTEY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO/100THS \$
(\$287,895.00) UNITED STATES \$
CURRENCY, \$

Defendants

2020年12月15日

7:24-CV-_____

VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE IN REM

The United States of America, Plaintiff, by and through the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas and the undersigned Assistant United States Attorney files this action for forfeiture against TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINTEY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO/100THS (\$287,895.00) UNITED STATES CURRENCY. The United States alleges on information and belief:

NATURE OF ACTION

This is an action to forfeit property to the United States pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6).

DEFENDANT PROPERTY

1. The Defendants are TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINTEY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO/100THS (\$287,895.00) UNITED STATES CURRENCY (hereinafter “Defendant Currency”). On or about July 8, 2022, law enforcement officers seized Defendant Currency from Lynda MONTES-MENDIETA (MONTES) near Pharr, Texas.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. Jurisdiction is conferred upon this Court by virtue of Title 28, United States Code §§ 1345 and 1355.

3. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1355(b)(1), 1391(b), and 1395. The Defendant Currency is within the jurisdiction of the Court as the acts and omissions giving rise to the claimed forfeiture occurred in part within the Southern District of Texas and in or near Hidalgo County, Texas.

STATUTORY BASIS FOR FORFEITURE

4. Defendant Currency is subject to forfeiture under 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6), which provides for the forfeiture of all moneys and other things of value furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance or listed chemical in violation of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. § 801, *et. seq.*), all proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and all money used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of the Controlled Substances Act.

FACTUAL BASIS FOR FORFEITURE

5. **Historical Background.** DEA Agents have been investigating a drug trafficking organization (the DTO) operating near Hidalgo County, Texas, and elsewhere. The following are seizures of narcotics made in connection with the DTO:

- a. In April of 2022, law enforcement seized approximately six (6) kilograms of cocaine from a vehicle associated with the DTO;
- b. Later in April of 2022, law enforcement also seized approximately 477 kilograms of methamphetamine from a tractor trailer associated with the DTO that was attempting to enter the United States (hereinafter “U.S.”) from Mexico near Pharr, Texas.

6. **Seizure of Defendant Currency.** On or about July 8, 2022, DEA Agents were conducting

surveillance on a tractor trailer involved in transporting cash proceeds near Brownsville, Texas. The tractor trailer was parked at a location in Brownsville and appeared to unload cargo from its trailer. After unloading, the tractor trailer departed the location and travelled west to a location in Pharr, Texas, where it was met by a vehicle driven by MONTES. The tractor trailer and vehicle then traveled in tandem before stopping on the side of the road, where MONTES retrieved two bags from the tractor trailer. Law enforcement then stopped MONTES. A law enforcement K-9 unit conducted a free-air sniff around the vehicle and alerted to the odor of narcotics. A search of the vehicle found \$287,890.00 (Defendant Currency) in the two bags found received by MONTES in the vehicle. The cash proceeds found were stored in two plastic bags, sorted in stacks, and wrapped in plastic wrap and duct tape, with the approximate amount in each stack written on the plastic and duct tape in marker.

CONCLUSION

The Defendant Currency was furnished or intended to be furnished in exchange for a controlled substance or listed chemical in violation of the Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. § 801, *et. seq.*, or is proceeds traceable to such an exchange, or was used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of the Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. § 801, *et seq.*

NOTICE TO ANY POTENTIAL CLAIMANT

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED if you assert an interest in the property subject to forfeiture and want to contest the forfeiture, you must file a verified claim which fulfills the requirements set forth in Rule G of the Supplemental Rules for Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions. The verified claim must be filed no later than thirty-five (35) days from the date this complaint is sent, in accordance with Rule G(5).

An answer or motion under Fed.R.Civ.P. 12 must be filed no later than twenty-one (21) days after filing the claim. The claim and answer must be filed with the United States District Clerk for the Southern District of Texas, and a copy must be served upon the undersigned Assistant United States Attorney at the address provided in this complaint.

WHEREFORE, the United States of America requests that judgment of forfeiture be entered against the Defendant Currency and for such costs and other relief to which the United States may be entitled.

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, Plaintiff prays for all of the following:

1. That Notice of Forfeiture issue according to the normal procedure of the court citing all persons having an interest in the Defendant Currency to appear on the return day of said process and make such Claim and Answer as they may have;
2. That a Judgment of Forfeiture be decreed against the Defendant Currency;
3. That following a Judgment of Forfeiture, the Defendant Currency be disposed of according to law; and
4. For costs of this action and for such additional relief to which Plaintiff may show itself entitled.

Respectfully submitted,

ALAMDAR S. HAMDANI
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

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VERIFICATION

I, Diego Marrufo, a Special Agent with the Drug Enforcement Administration, hereby verify under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the facts set forth in the Factual Basis in the foregoing Complaint For Forfeiture In Rem are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Executed on the 4th day of August, 2024.





